

Early Days in Switzerland County

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Switzerland county lies in the far southeastern corner of the State and Vevay, its principal town and capital, is on the Ohio river. The name of the county is explained by the fact of its settlement by Swiss immigrants who were drawn by the supposed adaptability of the soil to the growth of the grape. It is bounded on the north by Ohio and Ripley counties, on the east and south by the Ohio river and on the west by Jefferson county. It contains an area of 221 square miles and is divided into six townships, Pleasant, Craig, Jefferson, Cotton, Posey and York.

The first settlers in the county of whom any definite account can be given was Heathcote Picket, who located above Plum creek and about three miles above Vevay in the year 1795. There was an abundance of wild game and bread was made from corn ground on a hand mill. He piloted flatboats down to New Orleans returning by land through the Indian country on foot. He also built the first flatboat known as "Orleans Boat." John James DuFour in 1796 explored the country along the Ohio river, seeking a location for the future home of himself and family. The selection was between Plum and Indian creeks. Under special act of Congress May 1, 1802, he purchased four sections of land, 2,500 acres, paying an entry fee of \$2 per acre and having twelve years time to complete payment. The lands were then divided and sold to the Swiss families who were vine dressers. The first wine produced in this locality by Jean D. Morerod, Philip Bettens and John DuFour, was made in 1806 and 1807. The quantity was limited but of good quality; the vineyards were enlarged each year and in 1809, 1,200 gallons were made.

These lands had been covered by the heaviest of forest trees, walnut, poplar and oak, with a thick undergrowth. In 1805 a crop of wheat was raised and the straw taken care

of and made into hats. In 1798 the Cotton and Dickason families settled on Indian creek, and in 1799 Robert Gullion on the Ohio river bottom above the mouth of Log Lick creek. The family of Morerods located on a farm in 1804 one mile south of Vevay. The first corn mill was erected in 1807 on the bank of Indian creek. Before that the settlers were compelled to cross the river, swimming their horses to the side of a canoe, then on to Lexington, Kentucky, where there was only a hand mill. In the spring of 1814 persons from Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York commenced moving into the county and a petition was placed in the hands of Mr. DuFour for a new county. He laid it before the territorial legislature and he was given the privilege of a name which is Switzerland after his native land. The county officers were: clerk and recorder, J. F. DuFour; sheriff, John Francis Siebenthal; coroner, Ralph Cotton; and surveyor, Elisha Golay. The judge of the circuit court was Elijah Sparks, who served until June, 1815, after which James Noble served until March, 1816. Jesse L. Holman was appointed and served until the organization of the State in 1816. The first couple married after the organization of the county was Richard Dumont and Matilda Phillips, the license being issued by J. F. DuFour in September, 1814. In 1812 the population of Switzerland county was about 900, in 1813, at the time Vevay was laid out it was about 1,000 and was mostly confined to the immediate vicinity of the river and creek bottoms.

The increasing population of the county as early as 1810 suggested to the people the necessity of a postoffice in their midst as they were almost shut out from the world around them. If one wished to get letters or papers from his friends or to send any he was obliged to go to Port William, now called Carrolton, Kentucky, which was supplied with a mail once in two weeks. John DuFour drew up a memorial to the Postmaster General which was signed by all the citizens of the colony and neighborhood and sent to Senator Buckner Thurston, who was a senator from Kentucky in Congress. Mr. DuFour was appointed postmaster and continued to serve until October 1, 1835. Although the postoffice was named Vevay, the town was not laid out until October, 1813. Until that

time no regular towns had been laid out within the limits of the county. In that year the era of town making began. John F. DuFour and Daniel DuFour laid out Vevay since which additions have been made by John Sheets, Perret DuFour and David Armstrong. In 1815 Edward McIntire laid out a town opposite Carrolton and called it "Erin," which was vacated. Peter Harris in 1815 laid out the town of Jacksonville, which for a while was a thriving village. October 29, 1814, the Switzerland county court divided the county into two townships and named the upper Posey and the lower Jefferson. Elections were held at the home of Robert M. Trotter, and John Dumont was inspector of elections. George Craig was appointed by the governor first justice of peace after the State was admitted to the Union in 1816. In the February session of the county commissioners the county was again divided. Plum and Indian creeks flow entirely through the county giving it a good drainage and rich lands for farming.

The first election held in Cotton township was at the home of Lot Hammond in Allensville, it being the first village laid out, platted and recorded in this township. Peter Demaree was the founder of this village. Fairview and East Enterprise were laid out by John Littlefield. A tanyard was established by D. K. Harris and did business for many years. Craig township was named in honor of George Craig as he was the first settler and some years later (1822-1825) was elected to the State Senate. In 1805-06 the residents built a block house in which to shelter the women and children should the Indians approach. David Bray was among the first settlers and the village of Braytown was in his honor. The first mill was built in the McKay settlement and schools were established as soon as there were enough children to go. About the year 1817 the Dutch (Pennsylvania) settlement in Pleasant township was formed and in a few years began to supply Vevay with produce. In the early days the people of this township were compelled to go to a horse mill opposite Carrolton to get their corn ground or else use a grater. The land produced fine wheat but made unhealthy flour. During these years there was very little money in circulation. If the farmers had more produce than was needed at home they took it to Madison or Rising Sun

market until the demand at Vevay was greater. On the west side of Pleasant township a number of Scotch families settled, also a number settled on Long Run, known as Seven Day Baptists.

Moorfield was laid out in 1834. Stilwell Gram, a carpenter, was one of the first residents. Abijah Grimes and James Long built a saw mill in the early days. Bennington was founded by Dan Loudon and "city lots were staked for sale above old Indian Graves." It is the capital of the township. Augustus Welsh built the first store building. School buildings were built soon after the settlement. The type all over the county was the log cabin. With one end for a fireplace, a log left out for a window, a log split open and holes bored in the end and pins drove in for a seat, a slab fixed under the window for a writing desk the furniture was complete. The teacher must know the "Rule of Three", reading, writing, and be able to make a neat pen out of a goose quill. The wages were from \$20 to \$35 per quarter of 60 days and when a teacher "boarded round" the salary was less. The first settlers of Posey township found it occupied by a lawless set from Kentucky. In 1810 Oliver Ormsby and Patrick Donahue, natives of Ireland, purchased what is now called Mexico Bottom, Donahue laying his part out in town lots, called Montgomery, but none were ever sold. In 1812 Elisha Wade purchased land and laid out the town of Troy, now called Patriot, the river at this point being broad and deep and the banks high.

The first school was taught by Mr. Fordyce in a log house with a sheet of greased paper for a window. He had about eighteen pupils. Thomas Dugan laid out Quercus Grove commonly known as Barkworks as a Mr. Smith in 1816 purchased a tract of land near Quercus Grove and built machinery for grinding the bark of oak trees which he shipped by flatboat to New Orleans, thence to Europe, where it was used for coloring clothes, etc. In May, 1830, a new township called Jackson was set aside and in 1831 the name was changed to York. Benjamin Drake was among the first settlers and laid out the town of New York later called Florence, the population being less than 70. The land in York township is in some places rough and hilly but very fertile. March 18, 1874, the plat of

Markland was recorded being named for Charles Markland its founder. The plat contains one and a half acres with Main street and Broadway running north and south. John Marsh bought the first lot and erected the first dwelling, John McClellan being second. The first store was built by James H. Beard. Centre Square was laid out by William Lawrence in 1835 and at one time candidates for legislature thought of changing the county seat to this place. Mr. Lawrence made the remark that he spoiled a good farm trying to have a town built. Charles Muret was the only physician in the colony for many years before 1813. Dr. Muret went on a flatboat to New Orleans and there became fireman in a steam mill to raise means to pay his passage to Europe. Dr. Norton came about 1813 and Dr. James Welsh in 1819 established the first drug store. Dr. John Mendenhall was a leading doctor, coming from South Carolina in 1815.

Daniel DuFour from the time of his coming to the colony in 1804 until as late as 1817 was in the habit of reading a sermon to the colonists every Sunday, but occasionally a minister would pass by and stop to preach. The *Indiana Register* was the first paper published in the year 1816 by DuFour, Keene and Company with Keene as printer; but later he left and Robert Berchfield was printer. Berryman and Child published the *Weekly Messenger* about five miles north of Vevay. In 1832 Richard Randall published the *Monitor* and for awhile there was not any paper when Isaac Stevens came in 1836 and published the *Village Times*. Then later the *Indiana Statesman*, then the *Spirit of the Times* was published for three years by James G. Fanning. Then Stephen C. Stevens and Benjamin Simmons published the *Indiana Palladium* for two or three years when, under new management, the name was changed to *Ohio Valley Gazette*. This was sold to Otis S. and Frederick J. Waldo who called it the *Indiana Reveille*. In 1855 Charles C. Scott published the *Weekly News* which, when it changed hands, was just called *News*. In December, 1860, W. J. Baird bought the *News* office and called the paper the *Reveille and News*, although this office changed hands several times it is still the *Reveille*.

The celebrations of Fourths of July were great events in the early days, not only for persons in Switzerland county but

across the river the invitation had been extended. These meetings were held in a grove just below town. William Cotton read the Declaration of Independence and John James DuFour delivered the oration. Sometimes a barbecue was held and an immense crowd always came.

Switzerland county was not behind the others in giving attention to her educational interests. About 1810 Lucien Gex taught in a log school house near Vevay and in 1811 and 1812 J. F. Buchetee also taught. The increase in 1865 of the State tax for tuition from 10 to 16 cents on the hundred dollars put the public educational work on a firm footing and since then the growth has been rapid. The first site selected for the town of Vevay by John F. DuFour in 1813 was a good one as it lies midway between Cincinnati, Ohio, and Louisville, Kentucky, and the steamboats plying between these two cities are its only medium of communication with the world as no railroad touches it. The lots in the original part of the town were partly in woods and partly in the "deadening" and some in the cleared land. The town plat was laid out and recorded in the recorder's office of Jefferson county at Madison. Notice of the sale of lots was given through papers published at Cincinnati, Louisville, Lexington and Frankfort. The sale took place in November, 1813, and was cried by John M. Johnston, Elisha Golay acting as clerk of the sale, the price varying from \$22 to \$92. Other lots were sold later at private sale. Dr. Eggleston says:

The sound of the anvil in the smithy and the soft clatter of remote cow bells on the commons linger in my mind as memories inseparable from my boyhood in Vevay. A certain poetic feeling which characterized my life from childhood and which perhaps finally determined my course toward literary pursuits was nourished by my delight in the noble scenery about Vevay, Madison and New Albany in which places I lived at various times. Nothing could be finer than our all day excursions to the woods in search of hickory nuts, wild grapes, blackberries and paw-paws, or of nothing at all but the sheer pleasure of wandering in one of the noblest forests that it ever fell to a boy's lot to have for a playground. Then too, when we had some business five or even twenty-five miles away, we scorned to take the steamboat but just set out afoot along the river bank getting no end of pleasure out of the walk and out of that sense of power which unusual fatigue cheerfully borne always gives. The old story of Vevay, Switzerland, can almost be used here in Indiana. "A quaint old town nestling at the foot of lofty mountains in the midst of vineyards and gardens of beautiful flowers."